march eastward. The traces were confused under an old larch, as if the bear had been going in circles. The bark showed deep scars where the bear had tried to get fresh sap from the trees. The scars were seven feet above the ground: our bear was a fairly large beast. After this discovery we went beating the teakettle like a drum. But the bear seemed to keep the same distance ahead of us. Before sunset we halted on a high bank of a river and decided to keep two campfires burning through the night. We felled a score of young pines and arranged them in two heaps, the thick ends put together and the tops in opposite directions. In the morning we lost the tracks of the bear; it must have turned into the thicket.

The trail was becoming more difficult, the taiga more dense, the scenery more forbidding, but our progress was uneventful. On the ninth day the heat was suffocating. We waded across several small streams and crossed a fairly wide river, the Aimcha, but cool water did not refresh us. In the afternoon the heat became unbearable. There was no breeze, the air was heavy and sticky. Unable to keep pace with the horse, I asked Mikhail to go ahead with it and I tried to follow them as best I could. Once I stumbled and fell and lay there—perhaps five minutes, perhaps half an hour—before I could get up. The forest had ended. The trail was crossing a broad meadow. Behind it, not very far away, was a new slope. The next creek must be at the foot of that hill, quite close. But where was Mikhail? He could not have crossed the creek. . . .

Suddenly he took my arm. "Take it easy!" he said. "After a rest you will be all right." He had put up the tent on the shore of the river. The fire was blazing in front of it, water was bubbling in the kettle, and a soft bed was waiting for me—heaps of moss covered with a deer hide that we had carried from Ayan as a tarpaulin for our baggage. I fell asleep before my head touched the bed.

THE CHELYASIN

We were awakened by deafening thunder. Then a torrential downpour began. All our luggage was soaked. We had to wait until it dried before we could load it. The march was particularly strenuous that day or seemed so because we had not had enough rest. Late in the afternoon we reached a long, smooth slope in the valley of the Chelyasin, the last river before the foothills of the Dzhugzhur. It was a winding stream in a very broad, partly dry riverbed. The stream itself was not very wide but it was too strong to cross where the trail hit it. We forded it two hundred steps upstream, where the current was broken by a string of shoals. On the far bank we found a clearing in the